

THE

16.

# CHARACTER,

Praise and Commendation,

OF A

*Chaste and Virtuous* WOMAN:

IN A

Learned and Pious Discourse against

# ADULTERY.

PROV. 31. ver. 10. 30.

*Who can find a Vertuous Woman for her price is far  
above Rubies.*

*Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a Woman  
that feareth the Lord she shall be praised.*

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## MATH. V. 28.

*But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a Woman to lust after her, hath committed Adultery with her already in his Heart.*

**W**E find by many Passages in this and the following Chapters, that our Saviour had much to do to free the Law of God from those perverse glosses and interpretations, which the Ignorance or Malice of men, assisted by the rust and corruption of Time and Age, had fastned to us; it being proper to the Nature of man rather handsomly to deceive it self, then willingly to go against a Visible light; to frame the Law to its own desires when it finds it hard to conform them to the Law, and secretly and by little and little to change the Sense, though openly it retain the Letter

In this state of things our Saviour now found the *Jewish Church*, wherein partly the Subtilty of their Doctors and Rabbies, partly the Tradition of the Lawyers, and practice and custome of their Courts had perverted the Law of God, understanding that loosely which was strictly delivered, and judging of that carnally which was Spiritually intended; Our Saviour therefore, that he might fully comply with his Prophetical office takes upon him to reform these Abuses, and to rectifie these Interpretations, which having done in the former Verses concerning Murder, he begins in the 27 verse to clear those Mistakes which had broken in upon this precept of *Adultery*; Ye have heard (says he) that it was said to those of Old, thou shalt not commit *Adultery*; But I say unto you whosoever looketh upoo a Woman to lust after her, hath already committed *Adultery* with her in his heart. Where by the way we must note, that though the looking of a Man upon a Woman be onely specified, yet the looking of a Woman upon a man is equally intended; and though *Adultery* be here only named yet all the Species of it are understood only our Saviour having once insisted upon that particular continues his discourse to it, that so the Comparison and Proportion between the outward actions of the Body, and the



inward actions of the Heart (which he principally aimed at) might more evidently, and more immediately appear.

In the Words themselves we may consider these Parts, The Crime and the Fact; the Fact in these words, He that looketh upon a Woman to lust after her: The Crime in these, Hath committed *Adultery* in his heart. Where

First, We shall consider the *Nature of Adultery in general*.

Secondly, *Adultery* as it is *restrained* to the heart only. Then;

Thirdly, In the matter of Fact we shall consider;

First, The lusting after a Woman.

Then, The Looking upon her to lust.

After which (having thus explained the Terms and put the Case) we shall endeavour to resolve, How, and in what sense this saying of our Saviour is to be understood.

All which, when we have done Doctrinally, we shall go over the severall parts again in the same Order, and propose such *Motives* to your affections as God hath been pleased to put into our mind.

We begin with the consideration of *Adultery* in general *Adultery*, as it is the *breach* of that Faith which is solemnly given in Marriage, whether it be by the Man or by the Woman, a great Sin sure; whether in respect of God, or in respect of Men; in respect of God, who was solemnly invoked to be a witness of that Covenant which we wilfully violate, in the presence of whom and his blessed *Angels*, and the Church of Christ, the married persons mutually promised their fidelity to each other, so that (as the *Apostle* says) they have now no longer power over their own bodies, in which they have parted with their right and property, and indeed they are now no longer their own but one anothers, and so true and real is this Change, and so neer and individual is this *Union*, that the expression of the *Apostle* seems to be very high and *hyperbolical*, and relishing somewhat of the *Poet* and the *lover*, when he tells us that it is *Magnum Sacramentum*, a high and a holy *Mystery*: when he thinks it to be a fit type and resemblance of that, which the most straining heights, the most gallant comparisons, and the most boasting expressions of our Love and Poetry together come infinitely short of, and that is the Love and *Union* between Christ and his Church:



an *Union* so near, that it is indeed flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone, for the same Spirit that conceived him conceives that, dwells in that, quickens and enlivens and moves that; so that it is not only figuratively and mystically, but truly and indeed his very Body, as the nourishment which I receive and digest, and becomes informed with my Soul, is a part of my Body, so near and so wonderful is this *Union*. And as for the Love of Christ to his Church, it is a flame as far transcending ours as the heavenly does the *elementary*; that is that that brought him down from Heaven, from the Throne, nay from the bosom of his Father, that cloathed him with our corruption, our miserable flesh, *debased* him to the form of a servant, and subjected him to those mean, but withal to those *affectionate* services, which all our vain and mortal love is so far from approaching, that it must vanish and hide it self before that sacred Charity both with *shame* and *wonder*; and all this to teach us, how holy and *unviolable* the *tye* and *Union*, how pure, how chaste, how fervent, how unchangeable, how honourable the Love of *Marriage* ought to be.

A transgression therefore against this *tye* and this Love must needs be an *heinous* sin, *heinous* in respect of God who is made a witness to that *Covenant*; and in this respect it was reasonably done of him who excepted against the *testimony* of an *Adulterer* as against a Man perjured already; *heinous* in respect of the person who is made a party to that *Covenant*, with whom we so carelessly break our faith and *loyalty*, and lastly very *heinous* in respect of our Neighbour, whose *hedge* we break down, and whose enclosure we lay waste; whilst we do not only purloyn and *defile* and dishonour that which is his most proper possession, that which is as much his own, as his own body is his Wife: Not only dishonour her, and her whole *Family* together, but we invade and incroach upon his Inheritance also by making our *Bastard* his *Heir*; suborning and stealing into the possession of his Estate the Son of that person, whom of all men living he has reason to detest for having been his most causeless but most injurious enemy. You see therefore the nature of the Crime here mentioned, how great a sin it is in respect of the *impiety* towards God, and how great it is also in respect of the *Injury* towards Men.



It comes next to be considered, that this *Crime* (as foul as it is) may be committed in the heart only: He that looketh on a Woman to *lust* after her hath already committed *Adultery* in his heart.

In his heart; that is, Though he hath not committed it in the outward act, but only in his will and intention, for indeed it is the Will only that gives the stamp and the *value* to the outward actions; the same *Act* in respect of several intentions may either be a bloody murder or an hasty Manslaughter, or an unfortunate accident, or an innocent defence That which defiles a man (saith our Saviour) enters not into a man but cometh forth from within him, from the heart, there's the Fountain that defiles the Streams, 'tis not the streams that corrupt the fountain.

That the *Jews* at this time, had, by their *licentious* and *indulged* Traditions and Glosses, very much defaced and darkened this Truth, and had begot an Opinion very common to the Nation. That a forbearance of the Outward act only was all that the Law of God required from them, may appear both by the often and earnest endeavours of our Saviour to assert the *Divine* Law to its primitive, and genuine and spiritual Sense, and to restore it to its universal latitude and obligation upon the *spirit* of Man; as also by a passage in the 12th Book of *Josephus's Antiquities*, who being himself a Learned, and a Wise and Well born person among the people, yet takes occasion to wonder at the Errour of *Polybius* the *Grecian Historian* (as he accounts it) That the Intention only of Sacrilege in *Antiochus* was the Cause why he was pursued with *Divine Vengeance*, ending a wicked life with a despairing and torturing death; as if says he, God used to punish Intentions only? So much more you see the light of Nature only in a Wise and un-interested *Heathen* was able to discover, than the understanding of a *Jew* bred up to the knowledge of the Law, and otherways Wise and Learned; only because it was betrayed and blinded by prejudice, and tradition of his Teachers.

*Josephus* indeed were in the right, if we consider Man only as a Citizen, as a Member and part of a Community, so his thoughts and desires can come into no account; no Tribunal here upon Earth that can take cognizance or exercise Jurisdiction over that which passes within a Man if it pro-

ceed not to outward act, as to humane Law, he is reputed Innocent, and even in respect of God also; the outward Act being added much aggravates the fault, draws more guilt and punishment upon the Offender, both because when we proceed so far, we give a greater declaration of our Will fully and perfectly consenting unto sin; and because we then only offer Injury, and occasion much more Sin and Scandal unto others: yet notwithstanding, tho' the outward act add to the guilt, yet it does not cause it. Our Saviour's Doctrine stands good still, *That which defiles a Man proceeds from within*, there the spiritual Poyson first spreads it self; the sinfulness proceeds from the obliquity of the Actions, from the unlawfulness, from the disagreement it hath with the Divine Law, which ought to be the rule and measure of all our Actions: It is the transgression of that that makes a sin, and the transgression of that, in this particular, that makes this particular sin. The consent of the Will to an unlawful desire after a Woman, tho' no outward act follow after, is that inward Adultery which our Saviour here speaketh of, and fully comprehends the Nature of the Crime which I promised to shew you.

We come next to the matter of the Fact which is here double, lusting and looking; but first of lusting.

What this lust here is, tho' many are guilty of it, yet perhaps there are many also that are ignorant what the exact meaning of it is, that do not sufficiently conceive the full latitude and extent of it; and they may indeed be more excusable because it is a point that even St. Paul was once ignorant of: *I had not known lust*, says he, *unless the law had said thou shalt not lust*, in Romans the 7th. What did not St. Paul think we know the Commandment? or was he ignorant of that which even Polybius an Heathen could discover, That the inward consent, the intension and resolution to sin, was sin? this certainly cannot be the meaning of this place, there must be some higher sense of it then so. St. James will help us to the best Exposition of it in his first Chapter and 14 Verse, *Every Man*, says he, *is tempted, when he is drawn away and enticed by his own lusts*; they move blindly and suddenly to whatsoever is acceptable to the Flesh and delightful to the Sense, without any advice of reason at all, without any subjection to the spirit of our Mind without any conforming themselves to that which ought to be the rule of humane Actions, the Law of God. Now certainly that which tempts to Evil must needs be Evil it self, that which is perfectly good cannot tempt us; and therefore says St. James, God cannot do it because he is so. Whatsoever does tempt us therefore must needs be Evil, for temptation to sin being an evil fruit must needs proceed from an evil Tree, a Tree that hath its root as deep as the first sin of the first Man, and our Original Corruption is the cause that there is any such thing as unlawful lust in us; unlawful I say, which is therefore Evil, because unagreeable and unconformable to the law of God therefore Evil, because rebelling against the Law of our Mind, and so violating that order and harmony which God at first placed in our Soul.

But that we may more distinctly conceive the lust that is here spoken of, and the true Nature of it, it is fit that we learn it of St. James in his first Chapter and 14 and 15 verses, where he discovers the progress  
of

of it, and describes to us the several steps and rises and periods of this Evil. *Every one is tempted, &c.*

Out of which Words the Schools have observed three several steps and gradations of Sin, the Suggestion, the Delight, the Consent. First the Suggestion which is not certainly ( as some conceived ) only when either our memory or our sense do propose to us an Object in it self delightful to the senses, the enjoying whereof is contrary to the Law of God ; but when it is proposed to us under the consideration of being enjoy'd, when by the help and assistance of our Nature and Rebellious Corruption, this very unlawful enjoying is presented and suggested to our desires, towards which the first motions, the starts and beckenings and twiches of our desires, are the first degree of Sin ; then we are, as the Apostle says, *Drawn away by our lusts.*

The next is the Delight and Contentment that we take in the contemplation of that unlawful enjoying ; then Sin conceives saith St. James, for it conceives with delight.

The last is that express and formal consent of the Will to exercise and put in practice what has been thus suggested, and so delightful unto us ; then it becomes as St. Paul says, *complete and perfect Sin.* And indeed these three degrees are not unfirly compared to the three persons that acted their several parts in the first sin of Adam : Namely, to the Serpent, the Woman, and the Man. The Serpent, there's the insinuating suggestion ; the Delight, there's the deceived Woman ; and the Consent, there's all Lust ; the Man, and then all is complete. Now to draw our Discourse to a Head, after we have thus opened the Case. The Question now to be stated and resolved is, Whether all or some only of these degrees are here meant by our Saviour, when he tells us, *That he that looketh upon a Woman to lust after her, hath already committed Adultery in his Heart.*

Concerning the last, the express and formal consent of the Will to perform this sin, I have already shew'd you, that it is directly and properly that which our Saviour here calls the *Adultery of the Heart* ; concerning the second there may seem to be some difficulty ; I am not apt to make sins that God hath not ; and I should be very shie of determining the particular, but that I find those who agree very little amongst themselves ; *Dominicans, Jesuits, Lutherans, Calvinists* yet to agree upon this point, that which they call *Delectatio Morosa* namely that the delight about enjoying and unlawful Object ( if at the least it have any stay and continuance in us ) is also to be put in the same rank with consent it self ; because the Will, tho' it do not formerly consent, yet implicitly it does, because it does not curb and restrain, as by Duty it is bound to do ; It offends as a Governour, tho' not as an Actor ; in suffering, tho' not in doing ; and that therefore even such a delight in this particular sin, tho' we do not fully and resolutely intend and purpose to commit it, is also comprehended under this, *Adultery of the Heart* here spoken of by our Saviour. Lastly, concerning the first degree, those sudden starts and first motions towards unlawful acts, tho' they are evil in themselves, yet out of God's mercy, they are not so imputed to those that are in Christ : Not that the Nature of them is changed that of evil they should become good ; but that the effect of them is changed, as to us-wards they are not evil to Condemnation ; that is, if we be



afflicted and troubled, not pleased and delighted with them, they are left as the *Canaanites* were amongst the *Israelites*, to keep us humble towards God, and solicitous in our selves to exercise us, not to ruin us. Not that we should yield, but that we should conquer for our virtue and tryal; not for our destruction and condemnation.

You see now what this lusting is our Saviour speaks of: we come next to the looking. *He that looketh*, &c. Of which very briefly.

There may be several Senses of those words, *he that looketh to lust*, for this *πρὸς τὸ ἐπιθυμῆσαι* this *πρὸς* here denotes either the event of looking, or the end of looking; the event of looking, that is, he that looketh and afterwards doth lust, or the end of looking, that is, he that looketh purposely that he may lust; Concerning the latter of these, he that looketh purposely that he may lust, he that implors his Senses as Factors for his lusts, to provide fuel for that Fire, and to search out Objects for those unlawful Desires, he that as the Apostle says, has Eyes full of Adultery, and therefore looketh that he may lust; of such a Person as this we shall make no scruple to determine, that he directly falls under our Saviour's censure here, and is one of those that has already committed Adultery in his heart.

Concerning the other; he that looketh only and afterwards lusteth though in that look of his he had no such intention, yet if his curiosity or his negligence be so great, that he has no care at all of his senses, that suffers his Eyes to run at random, and makes no manner of Covenant with them, and sets no watch upon those Windows at which death may enter in, if he so look that he do lust, if this event do ensue upon him by his own default if his Soul be so like a City without Gates and Bars that all Objects are suffered to enter in without controul, if he have no care at all of the first degree of Sin, which is the suggestion, but entertains a Parley with this Serpent, and either negligently or curiously leads himself into Temptation, if upon that suggestion there follow delight, and with that delight sin conceives (much more if it proceed so far as to consent and so sin become perfect and consummate) though I pity his case much more then the former, yet I dare not absolve him from the guilt, but must render him up to the censure of our Saviour here, and not out of my severity, but out of my affection and care of his Soul and his eternal good, I must tell him plainly and friendly, that I do more than fear, that such a look with such an event ensuing, will at the Judgment Seat of Christ, be reckoned Adultery in the Heart.

I have at length discovered to you the Nature both of the Crime and of the Fact, and have stated the case and given you such Reasons as to me seem concluding, why and in what sense this Fact of looking after a Woman to lust after her ought to be reputed the Committing Adultery in ones Heart. I come next to propose such Motives to your Affections, to avoid this Crime, and take heed of this Fact, as have offer'd themselves to my consideration; and first concerning Adultery.

But what shall I say of Adultery in an Assembly of Christians especially of such Christians as I hope and am perswaded are here present to hear me? a Crime so impious towards God, so unjust,

towards Men, so unclean against our selves : this is a Crime says *Job*, to be punish'd by the Judges, the purity of the Law of Christ, needs not trouble it self about so foul a Sin as this is, civil Laws ought to take notice and punish this humane society; cannot subsist with this sin: A crime that breaks through all *Covenants*, confounds all Races and *Families*, disturbs and unsettles all Inheritances, and fills the whole *World* with Tumult and Madness and Confusion, O my beloved Brethren, We need seek no further cause of the confusion of this State then to have this crime frequent amongst us; of this says our Saviour, *Dictum est antiquis*, long ago this sin has been forbidden, it has been reputed abominable ever since Mankind has been upon the earth, in the darkest times; no *Nation* so barbarous as not to acknowledge it, and in the wickedest of times (wonder not at my expressions) no *Nation* so extremely civil as yet to forget it, even those prodigies of *lust* and blood the *Roman Tyrants* themselves enacted Laws and Penalties against it, and therefore for my own part, methinks I find my self in the same condition as that *Law-giver* was, who refused to make a Law against *Paricide*, because he presumed no body would commit it; and therefore he was loth to hatch it by forbidding of it, for it is of a much lesser sin then this, though of it self great enough God knows, that *St. Paul* says, Let it not once be named amongst *Christians*? and therefore of this sin, I hope we shall be so far from the *Impudence* of naming it, that we shall not so much as have the *sinfulness* of thinking of it. For let us consider I beseech you only two *Motives* upon which *St Paul* perswades us to avoyd Fornication, much more *Adultery*, you shall find them in the first Epistle to the *Corinthians* (a People whose City was very notorious for that *Vice*) and the sixth Chapter of that Epistle, the Motives are brifly these, That they should therefore forbear that sin, because their members were members of *Christ*, and because also they were *Temples* of the *Holy Ghost*. Beloved, We of the *Clergy*, say something sometimes concerning *Sacriledge*, and when we do so we are counted Fools for our labour, but whether that which we call *Sacriledge* be so or no, God will one day Judge, and I am horribly afraid least he be Judging it already; but I say, be that as it will, I am sure, that which *St. Paul* speaks of here is *Sacriledge* to the purpose, to prophane the *Temple* of the *Holy Ghost*, a *Temple* which God has made, and not Man, a *Temple* in which God inhabits, wherein the *Holy Ghost* does truly and literally dwell and reside, to prophane this, not only to *worldly business*, but to *sinful business*, to *lust*, to *uncleanness*, to *Fornication*, to take the *members* of *Christ* and make them the *members* of an *Harlot*, as the Apostle says, certainly my Brethren, it is the most rhetorical, the most emphatical expression in the whole Bible, the *Members* of *Christ*, so pure, so holy, so chaste, so honourable, and to make these the *members* of an *Harlot*: an *Harlot*, What's that? Why what is it but the *Common Sewer*, that receives all the filth of the Town, I humbly crave your pardon for my expression; it is indeed too short, it is not home enough: Alas! this receives but the natural *filthiness*, but the other receives all the *moral filthiness*. We would account it an horrid thing for one to take the *Body* of *Christ*, and tread it in the dirt under his feet, and tumble it up

and down in the Kennel ; why, it is much worse to take his *members* and make them the *members* of an *Harlot* ; a creature that is made up of Lust and Impudence, and the absence of all Vertue, more diseased in her soul then she is in her body, not only most abominable to vertuous minds, but even to those persons themselves that make use of her, nay I am perswaded at that very time when they are carryed headlong with the violent rage of their impetuous *lust*, and yet to take the *members* of an *Harlot*, why 'tis not possible the Apostle should give a higher expression then this.

Beloved, we are apt to think that our *members* are our own, that we may do what we list with them, but St. Paul will tell us we are much deceived, *You are bought with a Price*, says he in the last Verse, you are none of your own: A price, what price is that? Not those *Corruptible things of Silver and Gold*, but *with the precious blood of the Son of God* ; and after all this cost bestowed upon us shall we so unworthily imploy that which has been so dearly purchased, shall we any longer sin against our own bodies with this foulness of *Fornication* Shall we so profane the *Temples of the Holy Spirit*, and so horribly pollute and defile the *members* of the body of the *Son of God*. O consider this you that forget God, least he pluck you away, and there be none to deliver you ! O consider, I beseech you, that if you be once pluckt away from being *members* of him who is the Saviour of the *World*, there can no manner of deliverance be left either for your *Body* or your *Soul* !

I have done with this part, I pray God we have done with the same also ; I come next to speak of the second part, which is the *Adultery of the heart*.

And of this certainly many must plead *Guilty* that are *Innocent* as to the other, and indeed the *guilt* of this is so much less, as the *damnation* of one alone is less then the *damnation* of two together, for the *Adultery* of the body cannot be committed by a single person, two together must be involed in that *guilt*, that's an aggravation that I did not tell you of before, and certainly it is a *Consideration* that will one day fall heavy, and lye like a talent of Lead upon the souls of the *Adulterers* and *Fornicators*, that when one of them is reclaimed from the errors of their way, and with bitter tears and loud cries with a sad contrition of soul has begged a pardon from God and made a peace with Heaven, yet the other runs still at rydt in their former sins, drenched in those habits of those *Lusts* which they have cherished and contracted together, easie to be corrupted, but not so easie to be reclaimed, the one going to life with *pardon* and *repentance*, the other with *impenitency* to death and damnation, O think, think beforehand what sad thoughts concerning this particular must one day possess you ! how close, how heavy it will sit to your souls to have been the Authors of anothers *unrepented sins* and the instruments of anothers *misery* for ever, how foul, how black, how foolish this *Wickedness* will then appear to you, that the horror will then be so great to you, that you will esteem them to be in a degree of *blessedness* that have no sins to account for, but only their own, and in respect of this *Adultery of the Body*, will repute it some approaching towards Innocence, to have committed only the *Adultery of the heart*.

How



How great therefore must the other *crime* be, in respect of which this here so condemned by our Saviour looks like *Innocence*, and indeed well does it deserve to be so condemned, for alas! what thanks is it to us if we have had the *consent* to sin, though not the opportunity? If we have forborne only because we have wanted the *confidence* of soliciting, or the *probability* of consenting, or the conveniency of attaining? If we have therefore only been less *guilty* because God in his mercy has not permitted it in our power to be more!

The *Will* is reckoned for the *Deed* in the sight of God, miserable were we if it were not so in our *good Works*, and therefore it is but Just it should be so in our *ill Works* too; before his Eyes *All things are naked* says the Prophet, but he tryeth the heart and reins, searcheth into the inward parts and corners of our souls, Mans *Judgment* must content it self with the appearance only; all the *Hypotheses*, the Suppositions that we can make here below must be according to the *Phænomena* only, when we have salved them, and many times before that also our business is done, but God he sees the course and order of our thoughts, *Understands* them long before, says the Psalmist, Judges them by their causes, discerns the spring from whence they flow, the end to which they run, the rule by which they are measured.

O if we would take the *Omniscience*, and this *Omnipresence* of God a little more to heart, what manner of persons would we be in all holiness of Conversation? What foul sins would we forbear out of the awfulness to the presence of that infinite Majesty? Whereas for want of this, what a goodly spectacle think you in the sight of God are some meditating hearts?

We should account it an horrid thing, if any should be so void of shame as to commit *Adultery* in publick, much more if he should do it in a Church, much more then that if he should do it before the whole *Congregation*, and that also at the time when either our *Prayers* were offered to God, or his Message delivered to us, such an *Ass* sure we should repute a *Sacrilegious Impudence*, and there would not be some Phinees awaiting, that would be ready to strike through such a Zimri with his *Javelin*; yet in the sight of that God that made the World, in the presence of him who is the Judge of spirits, how often do we commit this *Adultery of the heart*, in private, in publick, in the great Assembly? I will not say in the Church, at the time of Prayers, of Sermon, even of this Sermon, whilest I am speaking against it, and that some come hither only for that very purpose, yet some there are that stick not to say so I would not pray for any sin, yet I pray God this be rather malice then Truth, but if any have been so miserably *Guilty* as to come hither with so foul an *Intention*, I hope God has this day met him in his Way, as the Angel did the madness of the Prophet, and that from henceforth he will proceed no further; take heed, Sin so no more lest a worse thing happen unto thee.

But I am weary of this *Dunghil*, I have dwelt too long in the stench of it, I pass therefore to my third part, from the Crime to the manner of Fact, He that looketh on a Woman to lust after her; he that lusteth

And here first of all ( that we may refresh our selves with a better prospect then we have hitherto had ) let us first consider the extream and wonderful purity of the Law of *Christ*, that troubles not it self about outward actions, contents not it self with the consent of the Will, but forbids the delight of the *Appetite*. and takes care even of the prime affections and first motions of the heart to sin, for as I told you in the beginning, though these first motions shall not condemn us, yet it is not because they are not evil in themselves, but because they are not so imputed to us, God lays not aside his *Justice*, but he takes to him his *mercy*, he sees those first motions, and he sees them as sins, but he sees the Mediatour too; Nay he both sees and hates these first motions, but it is as a Physician sees the Disease of his beloved Son, whom he does not therefore hate, because he has that Disease, he hates the Disease but he loves his Son, and would therefore destroy the Disease, that he my save the Child.

How much therefore ought we to humble our selves before this gracious God? Humble our selves before his *Justice*, when we consider our own desires, and humble our selves before his mercy when we consider his readiness to pardon, and his willingness to amend us? How ought we to put on such affections to our selves as he has towards us, to love our *persons*, and to hate our *Corruptions*? If we be pleased, if we be delighted with them, there's no hope of cure, nay there's no hope of *pardon*, we every minute grow sicker and sicker, till we are sick unto death; if we will recover our lost health, we must grieve, we must be angry with these *Lusts*, charm them away with our *Prayers*, wear them away with *Fasting*, vex them away with *Labour*, let a charitable Industry employ those *affections* that would break out into *Lust*; let it come forth in Fruit, that would run out in Weeds; the heart of Man will still be putting out somewhat, if Grace work not, Corruption will; if our heart be suffered to be like a standing Pool, we must expect the surface of it to be covered with Froth and Scumme, where there is fulness of Bread, and Idleness to boot, we must expect even the sins of *Sodom* to follow after; God has put it into our power to avoid or overcome these Temptations, by Devotion, by Austerity, by Business; much more not to lead our selves into Temptation. Not to look upon a Woman, that we may *lust* after her, which is my last part, *He that looketh*.

And here I must not pass by a good Observation of Saint *Chrysostome* upon this Text of our Saviour, He that looketh upon a Woman, &c. that though at the first blush it may appear to be *Durus Sermo*, a hard saying, and we are ready to cry out with the Disciples, Who can bear it, yet if we consider it well, says he, it will appear to have more of Gentleness and Lenity then of Hardness and Severity: Had our Saviour indeed enjoined us to look, and withal forbidden us to *lust*, it had been perhaps to many men as if he had bidden them to stand by the fire and yet forbidden them to be warm, but when he forewarns us of our danger and shews how to avoid it, when he tells us if we be apt to *Lust*, we should take care not to Look, this sure is mercy and Lenity, for 'tis as if a Friend should thus advise us, has Drunkenness at any time put you in danger of your

your life, and are you apt to be overcome with Wine when you drink? If you have not the gift of Temperance, forbear it altogether, better to drink no Wine at all, then to be in Danger of Death by it? So our Saviour here, Can you not make a Covenant with your Heart not to Lust? Why then make a Covenant with your Eyes not to Look; I am sure that is in your power, if you would not sin, do not run into temptation.

But you will say, Why, to what end was Beauty made then, if it were not made to be seen and looked upon? Here's a Doctrine that turns all things into the first Chaos, that brings darkness upon the World again, or at the least makes light wholly unuseful, for what use is there of Light, if Ugliness and Beauty must be equally forborn? So wise we are for our own hurt, and so wittily as we think we Argue for our own destruction, the Light we know is a beautiful Creature, and a pleasant thing it is to behold the Sun, says Solomon, yet we think it very reasonable for the Physician to say to us, Are your Eyes sore? Then forbear to look upon the beautiful Light, and in the mean time we do not think it reasonable for the Physician of our Souls to say to us Are your Eyes Lustful? Then forbear to look upon that Beautiful Woman; Yes, perhaps we begin to think it somewhat reasonable, but we struggle against it with grudging and discontent, just as the sick man does against his Physician that out of his care to him has strictly forbidden such or such a meat, he thinks fit to obey at last, but with such a repining, such a languishing, and unwilling obedience, as if he had now no pleasure left in life, as if it were all one to him to refrain this and to dye, what care now has the Physician for so perverse, so wrangling an Appetite, but to deal plainly with him, that he may eat if he please, but if he do he will certainly dye? So here What, take away all pleasure of life, no looking upon that beautiful Sex, as good then pull out our Eyes also; Right says our Saviour ( resolutely shaking off this wrangling Sophistry ) not only as good, but you had better do so then Lust. If thine Eye offend, says he in the next Verse, yea though it be thy right Eye, most dear, most useful to thee, yet pluck it out, though it be with pain, and cast it from thee, though it be with regret, for thine Eyes were given thee for thy benefit, to direct thee in thy way; not to be unto thee an occasion of falling, better one of thy Members should perish than thy whole body be cast into Hell; if thine Eye be more worth than thy whole body, if to look with the danger of lusting be a greater pleasure than the suffering of Hell fire be a pain, then look on and spare not; but if, as the Prophet says, No Man can dwell with perpetual burnings, then sure it is better to forbear a short pleasure than to hazard eternal torment.

Well perhaps at last we are resolved to obey this precept, yet our Nature is ready to cry out *Durus Sermo*, 'tis a hard task though, and to sinful men it is so indeed; My brethren ( I beseech God every day to make it easier to every one of us ( but remember withal, that Hell's an ill place, and Heaven is a very good one; that Christ hath performed a much harder task for our sakes; that the business we are now upon, is matter either of eternal death or eternal life; that Strait is the Gate and Narrow is the Way that leadeth to that life, and few there be, that



that find it, that *Heaven is entred by Violence, and the Violent take it by force*, not getting thither unless we offer force and violence to our *corruption and lusts*, and put a curb and restraint upon our natural inclinations, a watch and a guard upon our outward senses: I confess it is a hard task, but that I may make it more easy to you I shall now say somewhat to the other Sex, and I shall at last turn my discourse from those that look to those that are looked upon.

For you are they that must assist in this Cure, and contribute your part to the Observation of this precept of our Saviour; for as God has committed to men the protection of your safety, so also he hath intrusted to you the conservation of their chastity. To look upon you (as things are carried by the custom of this Country) for the most part lyes wholly in their power, but to look so that they may not lust. that commonly lyes very much in yours; For let the fruit be never so pleasant to the eye, if there be no hope that it will be fit for food, the *Serpent* will have but small encouragement for his temptation; It may indeed fall out, that if *Angels* themselves should descend from heaven, and appear cloathed in humane Beauty, there may not want such sons of *Belial* that may even break through a door to attempt their chastity, but these are the children of *Sodom*. Our Cities have few such inhabitants, few men are come to that excellency of wickedness as to be like *Satan* himself, who delights to tempt the virtuous most; No, no, that wretchedly miscalled Love, that has seduced so many souls to their ruin: that which our Saviour calls by its true name, how gently soever we may think fit to deal with it, that which is indeed our *Idleness* is made our *business*, has not yet arrived to such Poetical tasks as to have impossibility for its object; they are Fools only which fit down to view a *strength* which themselves esteem Impregnable.

A Woman certainly may if she please carry her self with that gallantry of Chastity, and be so fortified by a publick reputation; that even in the midst of a crooked generation, when weaker places are daily taken in about her, yet she may stand alone, not only *unconquered and unattempted*, but even unhopd for and undesired: She may be so consecrated by her known *Virtue*, that nothing that is vile, nothing that has but suspicion of evil shall dare to approach her; that we shall not have the confidence to dart any Look to her face that we would not send up towards *Heaven*; nor present any *Suit* to that Ear, that we would not bring to the *Temple* and the *Altar*: And as when we see a comely and magnificent structure dedicated to the *Divine Service*, it adds an advantage even to pious thoughts, and strikes religious *reverence* into all sober men, whilst the very beholding these things to be consecrated to God (which were they applyed even to ill uses, would yet retain in themselves an inherent excellency) does even by our senses lead us on to Devotion, and causes a secret and happy consent and harmony between the *Spiritual* and *Sensible* part of Man in holy duties; so also those persons whom God hath built in an extraordinary manner, and indued with *Beauty* above others, if these I say, in an age and complexion and constitution ripe for delight, and casioned for *pleasure*, shall yet consecrate themselves to God and his service,

service, by works of Piety, and *Charity*, and not only by an unblemished life, but by pure and unspotted *thoughts* preserve themselves either in a single or conjugal *Chastity*; O what good is there that these persons may not do! How many men may they conduct to *Heaven*, that might perhaps have been so unfortunate, as to have followed, had they led on, to *Hell*? What a testimony will it be to *Religion*, to see the best and choicest things thus consecrated to it? How will they be like the Fat of the *Sacrifice* to increase Mens *Devotion*; and how exceedingly to the honour of their *Creator*, will they be able to imploy that natural Dominion that *Beauty* enjoys over the hearts of the Spectatours.

For, Beloved, I hope we are not so vain or so wicked, as to think that *Beauty* is none of God's Gifts, sure if it be it may be imployed to his *Glory*, Men may behold it to their *Benefit* as well as look upon it to *Lust*. God has not sent it into the World as a *trap* and a *snare* only to do mischief, and given it so great a power over the *Soul* of Man only to *destroy* it; No, no, We read in the *Ecclesiastical Story*, how great an influence towards the *Conversion* of the first Christian King of *France*, proceeded from the *Beauty* and agreeableness of his Christian *Wife*. And even in our English Story we find thus much, that God stirred up the heart of *Gregory* the Pope, to send Preachers to our Saxon Ancestours, only by beholding the Comeliness of some of the Inhabitants then Prisoners at *Rome*? and in the wonderful Providence of God, it was so disposed, that the first occasion of the *Conversion* of this Nation, was the *Beauty* of the People.

Thus you see God has plac'd it in your power, to be the Instruments either of much good or much evil; and puts it to your choice, whether you will lead after you a train and retinue of Hearts, towards him, or towards his *Enemy*.

I hope none here will be Authors of a defection from God; none that will be like the Idolaters Temple, fair and goodly without, but within contain nothing but an Ape, or a Goat, or some more deformed Monster: None that so adorns, so sets out her self, that she may be looked on, that she may be lusted after; that even desires to be an Object of the Sins of Men, and accounts it her Glory that she has been to many an occasion of falling; if there be, I must tell her very plainly, That the Fire of Lust cannot be kindled without the fire of Hell too. If she can endure this hereafter, let her please her self in kindling that here. But I hope there are none present whom this Admonition may concern.

Only to those who have learned Christ, I have a few more Words to say, and it is, That they will but seriously consider one expression of *St. Paul*, it is an expression which before they have heard of in this place, and it is only these Words, *As it becomes Women professing Godliness*: that they would but thoroughly weigh the Emphasis of these Words *Professing Godliness*: Can it stand with the profession of Godliness to be ashamed of Christ before Men? When you have been conversing with him in a good Book, or a good Discourse, or a good Prayer, or a good Meditation; and lewd com-

pany break in upon you ; can it become you to be ashamed of any good Words as long as they are there ? Not to afford one Word in the behalf of Christ in that ill Company ; but bluntly to say to him, Lord I desire thee to leave me now, and to come again at Night to me by my Beds side, or to morrow Morning in my Closet ; I must now comply with this Company ; We must discourse who loves and is beloved, Call that Love which thou call'st Adultery, give it a gentler Name, put a Bait on the Hook that it may be sure to be swallowed ; or if not bear our parts of the Discourse, yet give aim at least : Let the Sin receive some Countenance from us, and our Reputation of Godliness be so far from giving a Reproof, that we shew not the least dislike, rather be rude to thee then them. Can this think you become Women that profess Godliness ;

Much less can it become you to suffer Men to make such Addressees to you, as your selves know to be holy repugnant to the Law of Christ, and extreemly contrary to the modest retiredness of your Vertuous Ancestors ; to call that Friendship which neither tends to Honour here, nor Salvation hereafter : If indeed it be Friendship, sure we shall with comfort remember it at our Prayers, I would we could gladly think of that and God together ; however so it becometh Women professing Godliness to do. I am sure it doth not become them, when they might be as an Apple of the Tree of life, to lead Men to Blessedness, to suffer themselves to be made an Apple of Good and Evil, to lead Men into Temptation ; to be once patient to be looked upon ; that they may be lusted after, rather with *Moses* to cast a vail over their Faces, if at any time, especially at Prayer time, there be such a glory in it, that it cannot be beheld without Offence. Sure it will be a trouble to us one day, even against our Will, to have been an occasion of other Mens Sins, and how light soever we may esteem of these Wounds we thus make, yet all our skill will not make them up again ; No Physician can cure them but the Holy Spirit and no Medicine can heal them, but the Blood of the Son of God. O consider therefore the Words I have handled, how great the Crime, how dangerous the Fact ! If you will not consider them, consider at least, who it is that says here, *I say unto you*. I who love your Souls more than the World does your Bodies ; I who certainly understand your Sins, for I have born them all, and exactly weighed the least of them ; Lastly, I who must judge those sins and give Sentences upon them, according as my self and not any of you have named them : Consider I say what it is that is spoken, and who it is that speaks it, and I doubt not but your Practice will be thereafter. Which God of his infinite Goodness and Mercy grant, for Christ Jesus his sake ; To whom with the Father, and God the Holy Ghost, three glorious Persons, and one ever living and blessed God, be given and ascribed both by us and by all the World, as is most right and due, all Honour and Glory, all Power and Praise, Might, Majesty, Dignity and Dominion both now, henceforth, and for evermore Amen.

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